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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7868  
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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL  
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

TUESDAY, MARCH 6, 2007

#### In Today's Papers

##### Baykal-Erdogan Row over Election of New President

Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report the main opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal told NTV that Turkey's constitution envisaged a "qualified," or two-third majority as the quorum needed for the presidential elections in the parliament. "If this majority is not reached in the first round, we will take the issue to the Constitutional Court," Baykal said. Baykal also noted there was no doubt that Prime Minister Erdogan wants to become the new president. "I think," Baykal said, "the public reflex to protect the republic and the country might still have a discouraging effect [on Erdogan]." Erdogan shrugged off Baykal's remarks, saying "qualified majority" was not stipulated in the constitution, and that presidential elections will be "carried out in the same way as in the past."

##### Turkey, Iraq, UNHCR Met to Discuss Mahmoud Camp

Aksam, Yeni Safak: Iraqi, Turkish and United Nations officials met yesterday in Geneva to discuss the future of the Mahmoud camp. The UN has stated that those residents of the camp who would like to return home should be allowed to do so and those who want to stay should be allowed to settle in Iraq. The voluntary return to Turkey of more than 10,000 refugees who fled in the UN run camp following fighting between Turkish security forces and the PKK in the 1990s, was discussed at the meeting. However, the trilateral meeting ended without reaching a concrete solution.

##### Editorial Commentary on Iraq

Cuneyt Ulsever commented in the mass appeal Hurriyet (3/6): "Turkey is a country of divided opinions especially when it comes to policy making on Northern Iraq. Turkey, on one hand, respects Iraqi territorial integrity, yet at the same time ignores the Northern Iraq element which is an essential part of Iraq's integrity. Let's be realistic about ourselves: Everybody in the world, including the US, is very well aware of the fact that in Turkey the views of the military are as important as the views of the government on

political matters. Given this picture, let's take a look at what the thought process of a US bureaucrat who works at the Turkey desk might be: 'Our major expectation from Turkey is to see it embrace Northern Iraq, which provides internal peace and has our trust, in a brotherly manner. However Turkey's views on this are not clear. Evidently there is a certain degree of softening on the civilian side but the Turkish military is still pursuing a relatively tough stance. We also know well that the Turkish military is very active in the political arena -- some people expect this activity in a period of presidential elections. Given this confused environment, why should the US help out Turkey on the PKK issue? We can only pretend we are helping out. Let's wait for the election results.' If we consider that the pro-Kurdish party DTP hopes to enter into parliament with about 20 deputies, things will likely to get even more confusing in the period ahead."

Ambassador Nuland Holds Talks, Meets Press in Ankara  
Hurriyet, Milliyet and Cumhuriyet report Ambassador Tonia Nuland, the US Permanent Representative at NATO, held talks Monday at Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) and Turkish General Staff (TGS). Hurriyet and Milliyet say Nuland told the press "The US and Turkey work together at NATO to remind everybody that Iran's missile development program is not only a threat for tomorrow, but in the case of the short and medium-range capability it's a current threat." Nuland added, "There is still a short- and medium-range threat for countries like Turkey. That system will cover the vast majority of alliance territory against a long-range missile threat from Iran." Milliyet reports Nuland responded to a question on whether Turkey will be protected under the US missile defense system in case of an attack from Iran by saying, "The parts of Turkey that could be threatened by such a missile attack will be covered by this system. The short and medium threat is different, and will require complimentary steps either nationally or at NATO." On whether the

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US expected new Turkish contributions in Afghanistan, Ambassador Nuland said, "We appreciate that Turkey will take over the Kabul regional command, increasing its presence in Afghanistan. Our commanders there are continuing to ask that all countries help with things like airlifts and helicopters, and that if we have difficulties in any parts of the country that we'll be willing to help each other." Cumhuriyet claims that after the Czech Republic and Poland, the US wants to include Turkey in the Nuclear Missile Shield project. Ambassador Nuland has raised the issue in Ankara, but Turks, thinking it will make their country a "direct target," are distanced to the project. Turkish diplomatic sources said a Turkey dependant on Russia and Iran for energy, cannot allow US missiles on its territory, according to Cumhuriyet.

Commenting on the missile defense system in the Islamist-intellectual Zaman, Fikret Ertan warns that the "son of Star Wars" must be "watched carefully": "Following the Star Wars project, the US is now working on a new defense system, technically called the National Missile Defense System (NMDS) - a missile shield system based on the ground instead of in space. Thus it's called the son of Star Wars. The fact is that realization of NMDS requires a wider geography and more bases, and that's where the Caucasus region comes in. US General Henry Obering, who is in charge of conducting the NMDS project, already told press that the US wants to establish an anti-missile radar system in the Caucasus. Even though the General did not say any country's name, there is strong speculation that Georgia would be the first country that the US will eventually approach. And most likely Azerbaijan will be the next on the list. If and when realized, the NMDS will open a new page in the world's military and political system. The son of Star Wars must be watched carefully."

Missing Iranian Deputy Defense Minister  
Sabah, Milliyet, Hurriyet, Cumhuriyet and others: Iran demanded information from Turkey about the former deputy defense minister Ali Reza Asgari, who went missing after checking into an Istanbul hotel on December 9. Iranian Foreign Minister said that the Turkish and Iranian Foreign Ministries were working together on the issue. However, Turkish Foreign Ministry emphasized that the issue was a legal case. Vatan reports that the Iranian officials told Turkish officials that they are concerned that either the CIA or MOSSAD

could be behind the kidnapping as the missing official has knowledge about Iran's nuclear program.

#### Doctors Check Ocalan's Health

All papers report Cemil Cicek, Turkish Justice Minister and Government Spokesman, told a weekly press briefing Monday a medical team of three doctors has taken blood and hair samples from Abdullah Ocalan, imprisoned on the island of Imrali, in the face of charges that the PKK leader was poisoned. "Test results will be revealed by the end of this week, proving all charges are lies," Cicek said.

"Since a retrial for Ocalan is off the agenda of the European Council, his supporters are trying to create new issues. The Turkish government will never choose the option of marring the health of the terrorist leader," Cicek maintained.

#### Iran 'Exports' Missile Parts from US through Turkey

Milliyet reports according to customs reports, "Step Standard Technical Corp.," an Iranian-owned company set up in Turkey buys electricity connection parts for TOW missiles from the US "Continental Connector Company" and sends them to Iran. The same company has sent rocket and missile guidance units it purchased from the French "ADR Company" to Iran through Turkey.

TV Highlights  
NTV, 7.00 A.M.

#### Domestic News

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- Turkey, under an ECHR ruling, has reached a settlement with the relatives of 17 people killed in protests in support of the PKK in the eastern Turkish province of Kars in 1993. Turkey has acknowledged security forces used excessive force, agreeing to pay 350,000 Euro to victims' relatives.

- The Diyarbakir prosecutor has initiated an investigation into a press conference held over the weekend by 54 mayors from the Kurdish party DTP.

- A Turkish military training plane crashed Monday afternoon in the western Turkish province of Manisa, killing its pilot Lieutenant Baris Cakir.

- State Minister Kursad Tuzmen, heading a business delegation to Israel, will join a business forum to be held Tuesday with the participation of Turkish and Israeli entrepreneurs.

#### International News

- Tariq Aziz, a leading member of Saddam Hussein's regime, told a court in Baghdad Iran was responsible for the poison gas attack on the Kurdish town of Halabja in northern Iraq in 1988.

- UK think tank Oxford Research Group warned military strikes against Iran could speed up Tehran's development of nuclear weapons.

- Some 6,000 Russian protesters blocked St. Petersburg's main avenue over the weekend in a show of opposition to President Putin.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

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